

Dear Ms. LeBlanc:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Morgan City, Louisiana, on August 22, 2003. In your statement you discussed the issue of coastal erosion and its impacts on the residents of coastal Louisiana.

The Commission appreciates your support for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) and other restoration projects. The New Orleans District continues to work closely with the State of Louisiana to develop comprehensive solutions to restore and protect the natural and human environment and create a sustainable ecosystem for coastal Louisiana. One of the purposes of the Louisiana Coastal Area Comprehensive Coastwide Ecosystem Restoration Study is to identify and explore long-range, large-scale ecosystem restoration plans to restore and protect coastal Louisiana. The LCA Comprehensive Study is scheduled for completion in June 2004, and it could be included in the 2004 Water Resources Development Act.

The Third Delta Conveyance Channel (TDCC) has been identified in the LCA Comprehensive Study as an environmentally significant feature requiring additional detailed investigation. Because of the potential far-reaching effect of this feature on the sustainability of coastal Louisiana, the state has initiated its own feasibility level study of this measure, separate and apart from the Federal Government's Louisiana Coastal Area Comprehensive Coastwide Ecosystem Restoration Study. If the LCA Comprehensive Plan is ultimately authorized, the state's study, which is being prepared by an architect-engineer firm for the state, may be helpful in providing a better understanding of features and

-2-

impacts for the Federal Government's Plan of this measure. While we support the concept of river diversions, we believe that it would be prudent to investigate alternative routes for the TDCC. The current proposed route would cause detrimental effects in the Barataria Basin. Guide levees would restrict the natural north-to-south sheet flow in the basin. The cut for the channel could destroy a significant amount of diverse habitat. One possible alternative would be to move the diversion structure near Myrtle Grove. Water could be diverted from the west bank of the Mississippi River to Little Lake. Currently, this route appears to offer the same ecosystem restoration benefits to the Barataria Basin as the proposed action and also appears to have fewer environmental impacts.

The LCA Comprehensive Study contains alternatives that offer the opportunity to mimic historic hydrology. Alternatives designed under this framework include numerous, smaller reintroductions combined with large reintroduction projects to be operated in periodic "pulsing" events. Consistent with this framework, the "increase" target in Subprovince 2 includes the "Third Delta" to mimic a historic Bayou Lafourche flow, as well as the relocation of navigation on the Mississippi River to allow for more dynamic deltaic processes at the mouth of the river. Where appropriate, alternatives under this framework also include sediment enrichment of reintroduced waters to mimic the historically higher sediment loads in the Mississippi River. In addition to testing whether mimicking historic hydrology would meet the various targets, this conceptual framework may also provide a way to help restore deltaic processes, while minimizing any potential impacts associated with the year-round re-introduction measures discussed above.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and looks forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission